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## Cultural studies and consumer culture

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As the purpose of this book is to consider the multiple moral and ethical issues that surround, shape and are roundly ignored by consumer culture, this chapter will consider what cultural studies brings to the table. Now, here it is important to say that what cultural studies is, what it does, where it came from and where it's going has been subject, over the years, to some very animated discussion and vigorous debate (eg Steele 1997; Hall 1980; Gilbert 2008; Grossberg 1998). My chapter will therefore necessarily present a partial view of the subject -- one shaped by the histories, interests, convictions and disciplinary prejudices of its author - and should therefore be treated with the caution it, like any other piece of writing, deserves, coming as it does from one particular 'standpoint' (Haraway 1988).

Today, when 'ethics and morality in consumption' are being discussed, one of the first areas to be considered is often ethical consumption. But it is only quite recently that 'ethical consumption' as a demarcated subject has been considered expansively by work that would directly label itself 'cultural studies'. Into this bracket would fall work like Andrew Ross's incisive, galvanizing work on the anti-sweatshop movement; Emily Potter and Tania Lewis's broad collection *Ethical Consumption*, which draws together a range of new work on the subject in and around media and cultural studies; the issue of the journal *Cultural Studies* analyzing the relationship between 'Cultural Studies and Anti-Consumerism'; and my own work asking just how 'radical' forms of consumption which purport to be progressive actually are (Ross 2004, Lewis and Potter, Binkley and Littler 2008, Littler 2009a). Cultural studies of ethical consumption do have earlier predecessors, such as Mica Nava's writing on the potential of ethical consumption as a means of progressive political change (Nava 1992), as well as numerous connections to, and affiliations with, adjacent disciplines like history (Hilton 2003, 2009) geography (Goodman 2004) sociology (Lury 2011: 165-190) and philosophy and literature (Soper *et al*, 2009).

However, for a deeper understanding of how 'ethics and morality in consumption' has been analyzed by cultural studies, we need to consider this issue in much broader terms than merely those demarcated by 'ethical consumption'. Cultural studies, as we will see in this chapter, has dealt with questions of 'ethics and morality in consumer culture' in a wide variety of ways; and yet it has some consistent and recurring traits that define its approach. Most notably, perhaps, cultural studies tends to treat the idea of the autonomous sovereign consumer with profound skepticism, as an ideological fiction useful to the political right; and yet its approach has also necessarily involved taking the (limited) powers of the consumer, and the contexts in which 'ethical consumption' has emerged, very seriously indeed.

In this chapter I elaborate on this characterization by attempting to describe what cultural studies *is* in relation to its treatment of the ethics of consumption.

### **Cultural studies and inter/trans/anti-disciplinarity**

There are two key features of cultural studies I think it is worth highlighting in this context: first, its radical interdisciplinarity and second, its political investment in conjunctural analysis. Out of these two features, cultural studies' interdisciplinarity has been the more widely popularized and well-known attribute, in part because it is easier to immediately understand.

Rather than respecting disciplinary boundaries, cultural studies has tended to energetically cross them whenever it wanted to take whatever it needed. This kind of inventive borrowing and flagrant disregard for conventional disciplinary boundaries was a hallmark of the work of the CCCS (Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies) at Birmingham from 1964. The cross-pollinated work produced there developed approaches to understanding the meanings, politics and lived experiences of consumer culture as a part of popular culture. For example, Angela McRobbie used political, sociological and gender studies work to analyse how the British girls' magazine *Jackie* 'sought to win...a set of particular values', including both 'a close intimate sorority' and an unsisterly 'claustrophobic world of jealousy and competition' (McRobbie 1978). Dick Hebdige's work *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* borrowed from sociology, politics and aesthetics to find meaning and political contestation in the clothing and affiliations of particular groups of young people, like skinheads and punks (Hebdidge 1979). In 'Woman becomes an individual', Janice Winship focused on how the encouragement to buy things operated to produce a particularly gendered and individualised sense of self, borrowing from gender theory, politics and sociology in the process (Winship 1981).

Work in cultural studies at this particular time therefore sought to take both the products and the uses of consumer culture *seriously*. It neither sought to bypass their relationship to capitalism, nor to dismiss them as solely false consciousness, but to understand the multiple and complex ways they worked in relation to both. Consumer culture was part of 'popular culture', although popular culture could not be reduced to it. Consumer culture's discourses and ideologies were to be scrutinized as important zones of meaning-formation, 'common sense' and political possibility, alongside and in relation to their exploitative conditions of production. There was a particular focus on how more progressive, equal and democratic cultures could be formed. As Stuart Hall notoriously put it at the end of his essay 'Notes on Deconstructing the Popular', popular culture matters because it is one of the places where socialism may be constituted. 'Otherwise, to tell you the truth, I don't give a damn about it' (Hall 1981: 239).

In these terms, to understand how 'popular culture' or 'consumer culture' was working in a particular context, you might not only need political economy, but gender studies, sociology, history and psychology. Many people working in cultural studies have therefore been fond of using (and adapting) Foucault's depiction of theory as a toolbox, in which you rummage around in amongst the theory and then apply it inventively to the job in hand (Baker 2007; Hall 1997)<sup>i</sup>. Some preferred the term 'multidisciplinarity' to 'interdisciplinarity', to indicate how cultural studies drew

on an array of disciplines. Others preferred the more combative or disruptive terms 'transdisciplinarity' or 'anti-disciplinarity'. As John Clarke said in a recent interview about the CCCS, 'I think the multi- and interdisciplinary formulation doesn't touch the *strangeness* of what was being done' (Clarke 2013: 734). Cultural studies, at least in its CCCS formation, also disrupted the great tradition of elite conservatism through its anti-disciplinary ethos. As such it was also part of a wider movement through which the purpose and origins of disciplines began to be questioned more capaciously: the history of, for example, English literature as a pastime for colonial wives and incubator for imperialism, and of art history in communicating aristocratic taste cultures, were opened up to further scrutiny (eg Baldick 1983, Bourdieu and Darbel 1997).

Of course such interdisciplinary borrowings also had a long history, and were in different forms symptomatic of work by many of cultural studies' forebears: no-one could accuse Raymond Williams, for example, of being stuck in one single, unitary disciplinary rut (Williams 1965, 1987). However, the degree to which people working under the sign of cultural studies felt able to rip up the disciplinary rulebook, and the collective energy with which they pursued these enquiries, was to prove profoundly influential in humanities and social sciences from the last few decades of the twentieth century onwards, where it helped propagate a wider interdisciplinary ethos in research, even if the siloed nature of teaching programmes often remained the same.

For instance, cultural studies helped (and was part of the wider currents which helped) history become more open to cultural history, and more open to considerations of the psycho-social (eg Eley 2005); literature become more open to theoretical, sociological and historical contextualisations and interpretation (eg Dollimore and Sinfield 2012); sociology become more inventive in its qualitative analysis (eg Skeggs 2004). These cross-pollinations further extended and opened up studies of consumer culture. Therefore, for instance, Carolyn Steedman's book *Landscape for a Good Woman* combined autobiographical reflections with cultural history and psychoanalytical theory, to understand 'lives for which the central interpretative devices of the culture don't quite work'. In the process it highlighted how class identifications were formed through consumption, and psychological investments, as much as anything else (Steedman 1986). Rachel Bowlby's book *Just Looking: Consumer Culture in Gissing, Drieser and Zola* came out of literary studies, but being similarly influenced by cultural studies' interdisciplinarity, produced an account of how the department store in nineteenth century Europe and America provided new semi-public spaces of quasi-emancipation – and in particular for middle-class women (Bowlby 1985).

Consumer culture had therefore become a domain that cultural studies was interested in understanding more simply because it constituted so much of 'popular culture' and everyday life. Indeed, the initial impetus for the CCCS at Birmingham had come from Richard Hoggart, whose sociological-literary-anthropological *Uses of Literacy* provided an analysis of changing uses of culture in England from pre-war back-to-back terraces through post-war Americanised milk bars and grammar schools (Hoggart 1957). But at the same time, cultural studies was also bothered about consumer culture because it was so intimately connected to regimes and practices of exploitation. The development of Marxist currents of thought and their

creative fusion with other disciplines was therefore a core aspect of cultural studies formation in the UK and beyond.

To do this work the multitudinous entity that became known as ‘cultural studies’ built on a number of traditions and currents. It is worth highlighting a few intellectual forebears which are particularly important in this context. They include the work of the Frankfurt School (because cultural studies was in part borne through rejecting its defence of high culture, whilst retaining its Marxism); the more anthropologically-oriented work on early-to-mid twentieth century consumer practices made by, for example, Mass Observation and Richard Hoggart<sup>ii</sup> (although work in cultural studies was usually far less nostalgic and much more hedonistic); and the work of Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci, particularly on hegemony, on the struggle between particular political forces, ideologies and blocs, and on the character of new regimes of consumption and production (Gramsci 2005, Simon 1990).

Crucially, the interest in using, rejecting or extending these kind of theoretical resources was one activated from the context of the New Left and the social movements of the 1960s, including the women’s liberation, anti-racism, gay rights and peace movements (Gilbert 2008). As Charlotte Brunsdon recently put it, ‘If the New Left, the Lady Chatterley trial and the explosion of pop and youth culture in the 1960s provided a formative first context, then the extensive extra-institutional radical culture of the 1970s provides a second’ (Brunsdon 2014: 91). Cultural studies had strong links to political activism. Stuart Hall, for instance, who Richard Hoggart brought in to head up the CCCS, was an editor of *New Left Review* as well as an anti-nuclear activist. Many projects around the CCCS actively sought to expand the zones of the non-commercial, to expand co-operative or communal spaces (whether club, community support groups or political activism) that were not organized through the profit motive but rather sought to (as we would put it today) ‘expand the commons’ (CCCS@50 2014; *Cultural Studies* 2014; Hardt and Negri 2009).

These mutual imbrications also generated work that was, for example, attentive to the role of cultural consumption in relation to social struggles over racialization, class and gender (eg Gilroy 1987, Franklin, Lury and Stacey 1991). Predating today’s interest in ‘intersectionality’, there was concern with how these facets of identity connected, or were ‘articulated’ together in their particular political and social context, a mode of analysis which drew on the work of theorists Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (Hall 1997; Laclau and Mouffe 1985). Consumption was understood as a part of these processes of meaning-making – just like it was a part of the broader political terrain which wrestled with, and then increasingly promoted, late Fordist ‘consumer culture’, as we shall discuss below.

As indicated above, one of the areas connected with ‘consumer culture’ that work in cultural studies helped open up most significantly was the relationship between consumption and gender. Work on the cultural studies / cultural history axis, for example, explored how, in the nineteenth century in the West, consumerism for white middle-class women in particular came to provide a space in which women could both exercise some degree of expertise and control and move beyond the confines of the private domestic sphere (Rappaport 1991, Nava 1992). The emergence of department stores in 19th-century Europe and America, for instance, provided a space where women could be and could meet in public. Places

like Selfridges also supported and promoted the cause of suffragettes (Nead 1992). In such ways, connections were forged between modern capitalist consumption and women's self-expression and empowerment, and cultural studies in the 1980s and beyond often analysed how these consumer pleasures could be spaces of affirmation and sociality (Radner 1995). The smuggling-in of sexism through denunciations of consumerism was also expansively considered in contemporary discourse and excavated in cultural theory (Nava 1996, Bowlby 1992, Lury 2011)

However at times during the peak post-Fordist, pre-recessionary moment of the 1980s and 1990s, some affirmations of consumer culture's empowering potentials could at times tip over into failing to take seriously both the exploitative conditions of production and the degree of privilege of Western middle-class consumers – a tendency Jim McGuigan termed 'cultural populism' (McGuigan 1992).

<sup>iii</sup> This tendency was a weak, depoliticised offshoot from the earlier highly sophisticated and politicised work in cultural studies that had sought to theorise the *agency* of consumers, audiences and citizens. It was also a characteristic eagerly seized upon and inflated by those hostile to cultural studies, for whatever reason (disciplinary protectionism key amongst them), even though vast swathes of work in cultural studies could never be accused of it. Nonetheless, as a tendency, it existed.

By the late 2000s this moment had well and truly peaked. In a landmark essay provocatively entitled 'Young Women and Consumer Culture: An Intervention', Angela McRobbie critiqued the appropriation of popular feminist discourse by the commercial domain, making 'a self-critique on the part of the author alongside an analysis of historical approaches toward consumer culture in cultural studies' (McRobbie 2008). Noting an unwillingness to return more *critically* to questions of consumerism in feminist media and cultural studies -- such as academic works on *Sex in the City* which were primarily fan texts celebrating hyperconsumption (and ignoring how such consumption might be environmentally destructive or socially exploitative) -- with careful analyses of the problematic imbrication of this with 'empowered femininity', McRobbie argued that it was time for such simplistic apolitical celebrations to stop. She declared that it 'the newly critical stance I am advocating would also entail the resuscitation and re-conceptualisation of feminist anti-capitalism' (McRobbie 2008: 548).

In short, then, in seeking to explain the connection between capitalist consumer culture, the textures and norms of everyday life and the contested terrain of 'common sense', those working in and around cultural studies have used a hugely inventive array of disciplinary tools from the academic toolbox. Whilst at the high moment of postmodern abstraction and the 'post-political' post-Fordist moment, critiques of capitalism could at times be bypassed by some (though by no means all) practitioners working under the sign of cultural studies – just like any other discipline in the humanities and social sciences – since the late 2000s, a vast amount of attention has come to be paid, once again, to the relationship between economic exploitation and cultural practices, through analyses of the workings of neoliberal culture (eg Gilbert 2014b; Gill and Pratt 2008; Hay and Ouellette 2008; Tyler 2013; Ross 2014). In this sense, more work in cultural studies has once again slowly gravitated to one of the key, if often overlooked, tenets of this (trans)discipline: the 'conjuncture'.

### **Conjunctural analysis**

The second feature of cultural studies which I want to highlight here is therefore that of conjunctural analysis. What is this term? It goes hand-in-hand with interdisciplinarity, in that practicing or trying to produce it necessarily involves being trans/inter/anti-disciplinary. But it also more specific than that. Understanding 'the conjuncture' means understanding the particular power dynamics and character of a particular moment. What is specific about the moment we inhabit? What common-sense understandings, what economic decisions, power dynamics, what vested interests and collaborative terrains work to shape its contours? What does this constellation of forces look like? How are these power configurations different from before?

When a conjuncture unrolls, there is no 'going back'. History shifts gears. The terrain changes. You are in a new moment. You have to attend, 'violently', with all the 'pessimism of the intellect' at your command, to the 'discipline of the conjuncture' (Hall 1987: 17)

For many practitioners in cultural studies, this has always been the central contribution of it as an (anti/trans)discipline and its key project (Hall *et al* 1978, Hall 1980, Gilbert 2008, Grossberg 1995).

'The conjuncture' is therefore both hugely suggestive and important, and not always the easiest concept in the world to summarise (which may be why so few attempts have been made and why -- as a concept at least -- it's been less well disseminated beyond cultural studies specialists). The concept was initially used in a political-theoretical context by the influential Italian communist Antonio Gramsci, who developed his work in prison in Italy in the 1920s and 1930s during the fascist dictatorship of Mussolini (Gramsci 2005; Simon 1995). Gramsci's influential theories of the importance of the persuasions of cultural hegemony, on what 'Fordism' meant, on organic politics and intellectuals, and on 'the conjuncture' had a profound influence on cultural studies and the left and the analyses of consumption which were influenced by them (or part of their project).<sup>iv</sup> Gramsci used 'the conjuncture' as a means of describing the specificity of economic, political and cultural forces at a given moment, in which both long-term organic and short-term changes in power relations are present, and as the place where political and cultural struggles are fought: a space where both established interests might defend themselves and 'the terrain upon which the forces of opposition organise' (Gramsci 2005).

In the 1970s cultural studies enthusiastically took up such suggestive frameworks offered by the recently-translated Gramscian texts. Whilst, as Stuart Hall pointed out, '[w]e can't pluck up this 'Sardinian' from his specific and unique political formation, beam him down at the end of the 20th century, and ask him to solve our problems for us', Gramsci's elaborations on the conjuncture were a key spark of the inspiration for cultural studies' analysis of the onset of what Hall was later to call 'Thatcherism' (Hall 1988) and its transnational relatives.

One of the best examples of an analysis of the conjuncture is that of one of the earliest and well-known works in cultural studies, *Policing the Crisis* (Hall *et al* 1978). This book took the moral panic in Britain over 'mugging', and brought

together a collaborative team with a variety of disciplinary approaches and theoretical lenses (criminology, media studies, 'race' and class, sociology) to understand it as a part of, and as symptomatic of a wider landscape – one moving toward right-wing consumerist privatization, conservative moral norms and scapegoating through racialization. This kaleidoscopic use of theory to understand a subject, and then to read back from it to identify features of the shifting power dynamics in the landscape is key to conjunctural analysis.

Understanding 'the conjuncture' therefore became a fairly open and malleable process which tended to rely on some key cultural studies resources and influences. These have usually included: a strong commitment to the more equitable pooling of power and resources; a Gramscian understanding of cultural hegemony, of the importance of culture in political persuasion, and of Gramsci's ideas of wars of position; a commitment to anti-essentialism, which refuses the reification of essentialist identity subject-positions (considering, for example, what a man/woman/white/old/ young person 'is' as historically specific and formed through cultural processes); a poststructuralist understanding of discourse which can be 'articulated' (Laclau and Mouffe 1995) or connected in various different directions (so, for example, environmental discourse can be funneled through capitalism or anarchism); and an understanding of tendencies as dominant, residual or emergent (Williams 1977). On top of these tools, a wider range of theories are drawn from, created or sought for, depending on the subject and the people doing the work. Therefore, some cultural studies work which seeks to be 'conjunctural' in character might draw from the psycho-social; some on feminist activism; some on literary analysis; others on philosophy. All would try to use this multi-faceted investigation to consider the configurations of power which constitute contemporary life.

The shape that conjunctural analysis took in its cultural studies formation, from Birmingham from the 1970s onwards, therefore often used particular theoretical resources, insisted on interdisciplinary borrowing and emphasized the importance of thinking through the cultural and the political together (indeed, in many regards, a better term for 'cultural studies' might well be 'cultural politics'). There have been relatively few attempts to produce large-scale, collaborative conjunctural analysis – not least as contemporary academic life with its emphasis on individualized branding, publication citations, 'impact' and research grant income tends to mitigate against such collaborative, open-ended practice.<sup>v</sup> Even so, the contribution and promise of such approaches was momentous, and it influenced many different kinds of work. It has been hugely significant for furthering understandings of the moralities and ethics of consumption and consumer culture – whether in terms of how consumer discourses shape political and personal imaginaries and realities, or terms of the profound shifts in the spatial and temporal organization of the mode of production and consumption.

Here it is be useful to look at some examples of how conjuncturally-oriented analysis influenced an understanding of ethics and morality in consumption in more detail. Whilst it is often the male-authored / edited collected works on Thatcherism that receive most prominence in discussions of conjunctural analysis (eg Hall *et al* 1978, Hall 1988) the important feminist work that notoriously challenged and extended it, such as work in the 1991 edited collection *Off-Centre: Feminism and*



*Cultural Studies*, clearly demonstrate how studies of consumer culture are a crucial part of such an approach.

A sizeable component of the work in *Off-Centre* was explicitly concerned with gender and consumer culture. Estella Tincknell's chapter on 'Enterprise Fictions', for example, examined the popularity in the 1980s of entrepreneurial heroines who 'make it' from rags to riches. It focused on the heroine of Barbara Taylor Bradford's bestselling novel-turned-hugely-popular TV series, *A Woman of Substance*, who starts life poor and ends up as the wealthy owner of a department store. Tincknell reads this narrative as an aspirational fantasy actively working to popularize the ideology of the individual bourgeois woman who can 'make a space for herself within capitalism', one which 'recognizes class conflict but not class struggle' and bypasses the mutual help of the second-wave feminist movement, evading 'any sort of discussion of the obstacles in the way of aspiring female entrepreneurs'. What such fictions offer instead is

the assurance that magical femininity will be the key to individual success in a world which demands that only one woman at a time can sit at the boardroom table. (Tincknell 1991: 272)

The analysis of the novel is therefore read in terms of a Thatcherite vision for women which does not trouble the sexism of existing social structures, but makes 'success' a matter of what Tincknell usefully terms 'magical femininity'. This is a matter of dressing well, using the right attitude and feminine authority, and in the process reinvigorating 'the mythology of the unique individual and its promise of self-fulfillment' (Tincknell 1991: 262).

Tincknell's analysis was preceded by Janet Newman's incisive chapter on 'Enterprising Women' which followed the emergent figure of the entrepreneurial woman across the pages of advice manuals from the 1980s. This figure, wrote Newman, is part of the ideological onslaught of Thatcherism, constituted through endorsing the qualities of free market enterprise, and is pitted against collective provision. The chapter tracks the appeal of their address to someone who does not want to follow tradition but could succeed and find their own niche 'in the marketplace of the world of work'... 'if you have enough self reliance, financial nous, competitive spirit and the determination to overcome the barriers you might find on the way' (Newman 1991: 241). The chapter foregrounds how these ideas become trenchant by offering such sheer galvanizing potential, noting that they speak to a missing dimension often ignored in feminist analysis of work - 'women's experience of the structures and cultures of the workplace and business world'. Predating the slew of Foucauldian-inspired work on the management of the self within neoliberalism by well over a decade, Janet Newman argues that the ideology on offer is one in which clever managing and purchasing will bypass structural social inequalities, and thus

The whole of life is thus constructed within the discursive practices of managerialism; and the potential contradictions between different elements of women's lives and identities can be resolved – if only women work hard

enough and manage well enough they can have it all (or nearly). (Newman 1991: 250)

In both chapters, the uses and attitudes toward consumer goods (in the form of media artefacts and business books as well as their representation of the landscapes of consumption) to examine how the highly individualised, right-wing figure of the enterprising, consuming female was gaining cultural and political currency at this time at the expense of a more collective social democratic vision of feminism and the social order. They indicate the importance of the discourse of the consuming woman who manages her way out of her class position and social difficulties to the neoliberal ideological project from the 1970s. Despite some hugely imaginative and important work (eg Rowbotham, Segal and Wainwright 1979), it also indicates the wider failure of the political left to offer a popular mainstream version of social democratic feminism in relation to this vision of liberation through individual hedonistic consumerism and a managerial, entrepreneurial self.

The context in which all these conjuncturally-oriented analyses of consumerist discourse were being offered was (in part) that of post-Fordist capitalism, and the analysis of these shifts in the dominant regimes of production and consumption was also pioneered by work in and around cultural studies. Robin Murray's classic article 'Benetton Britain' in the collection *New Times*, for instance, provided an influential and pithy analysis of epochal shifts in the mode of production and consumption. This sketched the move from the 1970s toward a multiplicity of intersecting practices by manufacturers -- of which Benetton was paradigmatic, just as Ford was for Gramsci in 'Americanism and Fordism' -- such as the use of 'consumer-led' focus groups, computerized orders, and shifts towards the production of small batches of consumer goods that could be made quickly using ultra cheap, contracted-out, exploited labour far away from corporate HQ and retail sites (aka 'just-in-time production' or 'flexible specialization') (Murray 1989).

All these developments in the interdisciplinary analysis of the power relations around consumption were profoundly informed by cultural studies' emphasis on the importance of the political-cultural conjuncture. They were further expanded, challenged and taken out of this British context as cultural studies was 'internationalised' and brought into contact with compatible academic practices in different parts of the world (Abbas and Erni 2004; Chen and Morley 1996). They have also intersected with developments in other academic zones, such as cultural sociology and theory and some strands of the area of consumer studies: which is as Don Slater once put it, 'less a field and more a spaghetti junction of intersecting disciplines' (Slater 1996; also see Lury 2011, Gabriel and Lang 2006).

### **Conclusion: ethics and morality**

In this chapter I have foregrounded two key aspects of cultural studies and shown something of how they have been significant in providing new and important ways of understanding the ethics and morality of consumer culture. Both conjunctural analysis and interdisciplinarity, as we have seen, have been, and continue to be, integral to cultural studies. (David Morley, for instance, stated recently that 'cultural studies is interdisciplinarity, or it is nothing'; Morley 2014: 25)

It could perhaps be said that cultural studies is in many ways informed by 'ethical' and 'moral' issues in that it is directly concerned with identifying the savage inequalities of power and with analyzing how culture plays a crucial role in both building these up and breaking them down. Yet the terms 'ethics' and 'morality' are not without their problems here, and so to conclude I want to say a little more about the use of these terms.

Cultural studies, as described above, has used an array of tools to understand why contemporary consumption isn't ethical (and how it could be). But ethics is also a slippery word. In its Foucauldian sense it tends to mean practices and techniques of being, as influenced by his work on 'the care of the self' (Foucault 1988) and therefore some work on the ethics of consumption in cultural studies will deploy this kind of emphasis in its analysis. This is not to say that it is not concerned with questions of power, but rather to emphasize that such Foucauldian-inspired work on 'ethics' deals mainly with how political fashioning works at a micro-level of everyday habits and practices rather than emphasizing its conventionally-understood meaning of ethics as the practice of self-consciously disputing right and wrong. For some analysts, then, such a use of 'ethics' is closer to the 'micropolitical' or 'ecological' (Gilbert 2008: 9; Zylinszka 2005; Fuller 2005). All of these varied meanings and histories of ethics and the 'ethical' have been drawn upon in cultural studies-oriented analysis of ethical consumption (Nava 1992, Littler 2009a, 2009b, Lewis and Potter 2011, Ross 2004).

'Morality' has also been a charged word for cultural studies and associated disciplines. Puncturing what is perceived as the smug zone of sanctimonious moralism, and instead opening up the area in question to question -- whether to question hidden latent ingrained prejudice or consider other, more creative routes to emancipation -- has been an important task for many academics connected to it (Brown 1995; Littler 2009a). Indeed, this line of enquiry was present in cultural studies from very early on, given how for instance it furthered the analysis of 'moral panics' (Hall *et al* 1978). There is therefore in some quarters a dislike for the very word 'moral'.

Yet other theorists have held onto 'morality' as an important sign of commitment to the task of analyzing injustices and inequalities and trying to move towards the equal sharing of power and resources (eg Bauman 1993: 34). And indeed whilst the highly individualized, sanctimonious connotations of morality have often been taken to task by cultural studies, its practice is also concerned with 'morality' not only through its analysis but also to a commitment to political principles. The difference between these two spheres was elegantly summed up by Gregor McLennan at a memorial in 2014 for Stuart Hall, when he said that Stuart Hall was not moralistic, but he was moral. Similarly, translated into the terms this book is concerned with, cultural studies 'moral commitment' to consumption involves arguing that all consumption *should* be ethical; and its critique of moralism involves excavating the political, social, cultural barriers that prevent it being so.

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<sup>i</sup> Foucault used the toolbox metaphor at least four times in his work, and usually used it to express how he wanted his own work to be used (see Baker, 2007)

<sup>ii</sup> Richard Hoggart's defence of the novel *Lady Chatterley's Lover* at its obscenity trial had resulted in him being given a payout by Allen Lane. He used this to fund the CCCS.

<sup>iii</sup> This sidelining of the politics of production also meant that ethical consumption, for instance, was an interesting blind spot in some cultural studies in the 2000s, which in part prompted my book *Radical Consumption* and later discussions of the longer genealogical linkages between feminism and alternative consumption (Littler 2009a, 2009b).

<sup>iv</sup> For example, Stuart Hall's 1987 article 'Gramsci and Us' was published in the *Marxism Today* after the magazine – which published an array of cultural studies scholars -- had held a conference on Gramsci's work.

<sup>v</sup> One recent attempt is the *Soundings* project 'The Kilburn Manifesto', which includes work on for example the way the language of financialisation and consumerism is part of our 'common sense'. See <http://www.lwbooks.co.uk/journals/soundings/manifesto.html>